Wet Ink

Spring 2025

Wet Ink

Mesquite High School's Student Literary Journal

Spring 2025

All works presented in this issue of Wet Ink Magazine are the original works of the extremely talented students at Mesquite High School.

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Janaya Winston

World Phenomena
Guadalupe Arreola

Metal clinked together into a small structure,
holding on tight to their similar friend.
Polyester lays over the skeletal mold,
creating an ark-like den.

Fire burned over the wooden pile,
consuming more as it grew.
Steam flew up in the air,
surrounding the brewing stew.

Once a rough land of dirt,
a path formed through time.
Beings of matter and mass,
make shadows through the complex climb.

Wildlife traveled through the area,
exploring their homeland.
Predators search for food,
prey take anything they have at hand.

Mountain peak stretching high,
a view hosted from far.
Trees and plants alike,
beauty on the planet like a scar.

Stars in the sky,
up in the air.
Clouds clambering together,
sealing the beauty without a care.

Flying Time
Nina Marie

No matter what time flies,
So try everything in your power
To never let it pass you by.

We get used to strict schedules,
Going and going the same patterns
Everyday the same rituals.

Days and weeks pass,
We get stuck in school
Going to the same boring class.

Never knowing what life could be,
Yet we are stuck in this prison
Not knowing what is out there to see.

One day you're a kid with imagination,
But they only want us for our wits
So they tie us down and strip us of our creation.

Now your eighteen dazed and confused,
Not knowing where the years went
Only knowledge is that our time was abused.

There's no time to waste now,
We are stuck in this time flying cycle
Not knowing when our time has run out.

Headphones
Imire Brown

In the most quietest room they lie waiting to be used
Two sentinels of sound both big and small.
Wrapped in padded ears they whisper
songs that soothes our ears

From the deepest depths of bass to notes so high
They let the music sore and control our emotions
A bridge connecting ear to the heart
A place where the melodies find their start

Through crowded streets or quiet nights
They bring us comfort they bring us the light
Through made of stainless steel they hold a soul
Binding the shattered makes us whole.

Every beat you play turning music into magic every day
You make the worlds seem so far away
I carry every sound the music make
Headphones your always there

When in their cocoon the world slips away
Leaving us with the rhythms that sway away
A symphony in every beat
In headphones life feels complete.

Heartbreak of a Loving Soul

Triniti Brown

Why break me when all i did was love
Why hurt me when all i did was care
Why be so rude when all i did was smile
What happened to us going to place and having fun
When i was around it was all okay
When i go to rest its back to where we started
I miss your smile and the way you look at me
I miss the laughs and joys we had
I hope i can find love again and be happy
I pray he gets happy and stop being such a nappy pappy
I hope he finds love and happiness with his next
While i sit over here and sadness and regret
I know regret is a strong word but i mean it with everything i love
I just wanna get this sad lonely feeling out of my soul
The pain hurts so bad it makes me ball but hey that what happens when you love the wrong person
He is so strong but weak and i am so happy but depressed that why we meshed
Trauma - bonds are real i see
I hope he is happy and i get there
I just wanna know tho …..
Why break me when all i did was love
Why hurt me when all i did was care
Why be so rude when all I did was smile.

Dumbo

Alesandra

His hair soft and glowy
His breath smells like morning breath
Stretching farther than a football field
His yawns exhausted like he's worked all day
His eyes judge

He doesn't know how to talk
But his eyes do
He is my day one
Been there for me on my lows
He doesn't know that

He likes to play
He sleeps more
The moles on his face stand out
Like stars in the night
He shines brighter than any sun

His smell fills the room
He's been cooking all day
I look for fritos
But only find my dog
My stinky dog

The Knock at Midnight

Miley Craver

Late one night, Hannah was alone in her apartment, a tiny, claustrophobic space in an old building outside of the city. It was raining heavily outside, the wind howled through the tiny cracks in the walls. Hannah always found a type of comfort in these types of heavy storms, but she couldn't shake the feeling that something was different about tonight. It's almost as if the wind was… alive.

Hannah cuddled up with her dog, Rex, on the couch. She picked up a book and made a cup of coffee, trying to relax and shake this weird feeling that sat heavy on her chest. But it seems like she couldn't keep her eyes off the hallway outside of the living room. The shadows grew longer and inched towards her more than normal, as if they were going towards her. Besides the roaring storm and occasional creek of the floorboard, the apartment was silent. But all of a sudden-soft, slow footsteps broke the silence. It sounded like they were coming from the hallway, moving towards her.

Hannah's heart started racing. There was no way someone else could be in the house; she lived alone. She stood up slowly, her breath was shaking, she tiptoed towards the hallway. The footsteps stopped when she reached the doorway, and for a second, everything was still.

Her pulse quickened and pounded in her ears as she pushed the door open slowly and cautiously. There was nobody. The hallway was completely empty. She breathed a sigh of relief and quickly closed the door, doing her best to convince herself that maybe it was the wind or just her mind playing tricks on her. She sat back down on the couch with Rex and tried to ignore the hairs standing up on her neck and her nerves making her nauseous.

And then the knocking began.

Three loud, slow, suspenseful knocks on the door. Rex started going crazy, barking like Hannah has never heard before. Her eyes widened like she'd just seen a ghost. She stared at the door for what seemed like forever, until three more knocks at the door. Each one louder and eerier than the one before. She was frozen with fear. She continued staring at the door with her breath caught in her throat until the final knock echoed through the old apartment. And then there was silence again.

The silence continued before a soft, creepy voice whispered from the other side of the door. "Hannah…let me in."

Hannah felt her body go cold. This couldn't be possible. She could recognize that voice anywhere. It was her mother…but her mother had died five years ago.

Hannah stumbled back from the door, her mind going a hundred miles an hour trying to find a reasonable explanation as to how this is real life. Her eyes fixed on the doorknob that was beginning to slowly turn. But it was not Hannah turning the doorknob.

The door cracked open, Hannah was numb, her veins felt like they had turned into ice. She fell back on the ground as the door swung open. She stared back at her mother, her skin pale as paper and practically falling off of her bones. Her eyes were sunken in and lifeless. Her smile was wide, too wide, stretched from ear to ear.

"Hannah, it's your mom…it's time to come back home" this... thing… said, as it slowly stepped towards Hannah.

Rex whimpered. Hannah couldn't breathe. She couldn't talk. She couldn't move. The apartment got cold. Hannah finally got the strength to get up, but the figure inched closer and closer as Hannah backed up.

"Don't run from your mother!", the figure said angrily as Hannah turned to run towards her window. She ran and tried not to look back at whatever was chasing her. She grabbed Rex as fast as she could and bolted for the window. She slammed it open and jumped, but as she looked back, it was empty. There was no apartment, as if it had been swallowed by a black hole. She stood there staring with Rex swaddled in her arms. And in the far distance, she could still hear her mother crying out for her.

Brenda Menjivar

Ode to my Mama Chup

It was my mom she loved me so dearly
Even when she was broke, worn out,
And weary she loved me hard even
Though time of living were harder
She never gave up on loving me

Each year as i grew older i realized
How much she sacrificed for me
How much you crushed your dreams
Just to fulfill my own and time and time
I disappointed you and yet you never gave up on me

You made me who i am today and who i
Use to be im so glad you sacrificed so much for me
I hate you cant see me thrive but i know you're
Looking down on me from the up high
I know im making you proud and will keep it up

You will live through me and i will
Accomplish your dreams for you
Hoping to make you proud
Thank you for loving me and
Never giving up on me

Buenas Noches
Osmin Hernandez

Eyes closed ready to dream
Breathing slow and light
Cold air falls gently on the child face
Moon so big and bright

Slumber engulfs the child
Dreams of wealth starts to play
Money and cars the only goal
His wishes may come true one day

Moon and stars shine
Lighting the young ones face
As he continues to dream
Of being in that place

As the night goes by
The sun starts to rise
Sunlight slowly wraps around the curtains
The child still dreaming about the prize

The child wakes up as an adult
Looking outside at the beautiful sight
Thinking about the days being wealthy was only a dream
While getting ready to go take a private flight

Wander.
Sketch

We should go hike this trail and see where
it takes us, said Jacob to his group of friends.
But soon they all found out that this is no friendly
trail but that it could have them all meet their ends.

They make their first turn in the cold rainy forest
not knowing where they're going, but continuing to wander.
Two of the friends having a great conversation
while the others walk in sonder.

Even though something feels off about this trail
as if they're being watched with hateful eyes.
They continue to venture anyways not
knowing that this will be their demise.

They hear something rustle in the forest
trees so they all decide to run in fear.
Finally getting tired of sprinting they
must think the coast is clear.

Then it soon got silent and they all decide they should
get to the car so they go back.
Not only to notice that the bear hiding behind the
tree was waiting stealthily to attack.

One by one they all fall trying to run in the
slippery wet mud, but can't seem to get away.
One by one they fall to the bears ferocious hunger
and soon became a fulfilling meal for the day.

BLM Ode
Luhdosa

Another one…
They can't keep getting away with this
Why does it have to be us?
Is it because of the melanin in our genes?
Or is it the Jackson 5 nose that we breathe air though?
The air you try to take out of our lungs.
My fists clench and my teeth grind
As I see another one of my brothers fall
At the hands of the corrupt.
Didn't we just lose one two weeks ago?
I don't understand why.
We will keep fighting
We will keep protesting
I promise you that.
And it's hard to keep going when we have a leader,
A Mayor
A Government
That can't stand up for us and stop this.
But to come this far without them
We can go even further.
The movement will continue until the hand
Is removed from our mouths
And we can finally breathe again.

I'd Do It for You
Alejandro. LL

Endless entertainment and fun,
For hours on end, everyday I pray for you to stay safe
A place where time goes by like a bullet,
A smile worth more than the purest diamonds
The sight of her makes me feel faint,
Already decided our fate
For a future we will share
To be happy, loved, and cared for
Moments we have all i see is the world fade,
A beautiful figure stands before me with opening arms.
Angels in the sky and only one descended towards me
Claiming my heart as i did with hers
Erasing all my worries and suffering as I hold her
Only to leave and feel empty again
Thinking of when it will come again but it's all a blur
Dreaming of the night where you'll become all mine
Is still a distance too far, so for no i will have to keep dreaming
Of that special moment in time.
Loving the only person that i see perfect
Only wishing to be in their arms dosing away in peace.

To My Sister Frog

We used to share a room
A space
a home
We used to share our dreams
What we feared
about the unknown
Now I stand
pacing a hall
you no longer grace
Staring at a room
that's no longer yours
You've started life
I get that, I do
Though its hard when all my days
were spent with you
You're moving on
and I am too
Just promise not to forget me
When you start your life anew
I love you.

Whispers from Above

Nevaeh McCardell

The old house had been in Angel's family for many decades. After her granny passed away, it became abandoned, sitting, just collecting dust. When Angel inherited it, she had planned to sell it because she had no use for it. Before she could do that, she had to go through the belongings that were left behind. Being there brought back a countless amount of memories. As Angel walked in, the floor creaked and the halls were barely lit.

Inside was a very unpleasant smell. It smelled like a dead body and mildew. Suddenly, she heard an unsettling noise. It was soft like someone breathing down her neck. She paused and started hyperventilating. She slowly turned, hoping to find nothing that would make a big scare. The hallway was clear. Angel sighed with relief.

Calming down, she continued through the house. It was very old, so it was probably just the strong wind coming through cracks. Angel said. Then it happened again. A whisper, faint and unclear. This time, it came from above.

Angel hesitated as she walked towards the attic. The attic door had always given her the chills as a child. She had sworn back then that she heard sounds coming from up there: scratches, footsteps, and voices. I'm an adult now and there was nothing to fear. Right? Angel asked herself.

Angel took a deep breath as she pulled the cord. The ladder unfolded with a loud screech. Dust fell from the opening, making her sneeze. A foul, brutal smell spread out. She climbed up the ladder. It was way darker than she expected it to be. The white bulb flickered weakly, barely poking through the shadows. There were boxes stacked randomly, covered in old, yellow-stained sheets. Then she saw it.

A wooden chair in the middle of the floor, on the chair was a doll. Angel's stomach tightened in fear. She didn't remember the doll from her childhood. Its face was cracked, its glass eyes misaligned, giving it a scary stare. An old dress on its small body, looking like rags. Then, it whispered. Angel tripped as she walked back, nearly falling over a stack of boxes.

The doll's lips hadn't moved, but the whisper had come from it. A soft, scratchy breath. "You came back." The light flickered violently. A shadow passed over the room, though there was nothing to make it speak. Angel turned and ran. She barely made it down the ladder before the door slammed shut above her. She hit the floor quite hard, gasping for air, and her heart pounding in her chest.

Angel started hearing, scratching from inside the attic. She ran out, not having the slightest thought of turning back, not stopping until she was in her car, fastly driving away. She never returned. Months later, when the house was finally sold, the new owner found something strange in the attic. A chair, and on that chair sat a doll. Its head was tilted as if it were watching. Waiting patiently for anything to happen.

Thanks to You

faith

Thank you for all you do
When I was little you used to always tie my shoe and though I don't show it
I appreciate the very little things you do
I miss the baseball games we use to laugh and eat too
I miss the food you use to stew
And though you're gone I never forget about you
When I get Chipotle I think of you
And even though it's hard to rhyme this
I'm trying my bestest for u
I'm going my hardest this year
Even if you're not here
Gotta run it up and go get it
To be worriless without you
Thank you for my fifteenth
Always hold those beneath
Remember the beach
Always a good reach
And now it's time
To say goodbye my dime
Thank you for everything you do

Mi Vida

omar

Mi vida is amazing with people that love me,
And support me when no one was there for me.
I have a wonderful mom. She does a lot for me. Her name is Viqui.
She had me when she was 17, and she never regrets having me.
I have a hard-working father that supported me over the years.
He even taught me how to drive standard, but I forget when to switch gears.
I have a sister named Alicia. She kinda scares me because she a little weird.
Even if I don't call her name, she would still appear.
I have a 10 year old brother named Nano.
He gets mad easy, but siempre me echa el mano.
My last sibling is my 16 year old brother, and his name is Carlos.
Me and him love the game of soccer, so we are really close.
I love my life. People always take their life for granted because they say it's hard, so I wanna say
No mames guey asi es la vida.

KING
Neonte

I got so much love for the game
so much it turns into pain
i got all the passion in the world
my hearts like a flame
that's always burned a lick of fame
put me to shame
as i look back upon my life
nothing but pain
& so much strife
it cut deep like a
knife
i'm as confused as a rabbit on the hunt
the pain hurts a whole whole bunch

Jessica Valdez (DriedBeans)

The Basement

Isbeth Ponce Garcia

The hallway light flickers and the buzz of the fridge grows louder and louder, “Buzz… BUzz... BUZz... BUZZ… BUZZ!” Martha walks closer to the flickering lights; every step she takes makes the floorboards creak. The more she walks towards the light the more she can see the figure of a doorknob. The doorknob is nice and shiny unlike anything in the house. Martha has been living with her aunt since she was four. And for as long as she can remember she has always been warned to never go near the basement door. This has never been a problem with Martha. Martha is a very well-behaved girl she follows as she's told and doesn't ask questions. Besides she's never had any concerts about what lies behind those basement doors. Until recently Martha has been having nightmares. Not just any regular nightmares, these nightmares speak to her. They feel so real, and she remembers them so vividly. It all starts with her waking up and staring at her ceiling as the walls close in on her. Suddenly she sees the view of her hallway. Her bedroom points right to the basement. The hallway elongates and the basement is no longer in view. Until, “BUzz… BUZz… BUZZ… BUZZ!”

Martha is now standing at her door looking into the dark scary hallway. She takes a step, and the lights start to flicker. The basement doorknob shines through the darkness and dimness from the lights. The more she steps closer the more the buzzing gets louder and louder. The lights flicker insanely fast, and it causes Martha to close her eyes. Martha guides herself by touching the walls. Her fingertips brush the dusty walls, an unsettling feeling that runs goosebumps down her back. Suddenly she doesn't feel that grainy texture on her fingertips from the dust but now she feels something cold and wet. Martha opens her eyes, the lights still flickering. Martha covers her eyes as if she was covering herself from the bright sun. Martha looks at the walls and sees blood seeping from the walls. She gasps and starts running towards the door and as soon as she grabs the doorknob she wakes up.

Martha wakes up drenched in sweat, her whole body feeling cold. She quickly gets up and looks around. “It’s still dark outside,” Martha whispers to herself as she reaches for her phone to check the time “4:13.” As she's checking her phone, she hears a faint thud coming from the basement. Martha's heart starts racing. She's been having these nightmares every day for the past month, and she's bound to get to the bottom of what's behind that door. Martha gathers all her courage and marches up to the basement door. She stands in front of the door waiting for something to happen. Minutes go by. The house is dead silent except for the faint thud. Martha takes one step closer and places her hands and ear on the door hoping to get an understanding of what's going on. Suddenly the door opens, and Martha falls to the ground. She looks up and sees her aunt standing in front of her holding a machete covered in blood. She takes a look around the room and notices the flickering lights and blood all over the walls and floor. Martha looks up and the last thing she ever got to see was the image of her aunt swinging a machete at her head. The house now remains vacant and no recollection of Martha and her aunt living there ever existed.

An Overthinker's Mind

Nadiya Reyes

With an overthinker's mind
Dark clouds arise
With every word lined
It becomes overanalyzed

And with every little choice
Lays a hundred thousand thoughts
Creeps another voice
Making you feel distraught

Because everything must be right
With every word flawless
Pushing it to another height
If not then it becomes thoughtless

Even when things go right
And the clear sky shines
It all becomes fright
Leaving it be borderline

In the end it all repeats
An endless thinking cycle
That will leave you beat
Until the next spiral

RebeccA Price

The Knight's Heroic Stand
Michael Black

The knight awoke to sounds of war.
He checked his window to see a field of violence.
The knight rushes to his horse in a rush to aid.
But all he could do was pray in silence.

The knight charges in and fights with his comrades.
His sword attracting blood with every fatal swing.
As he slayed the enemy with all of his might.
The people and companions he saved sing.

The knight sees an enemy commander charge forth.
The knight stood ready for a duel.
The commander hops off his sword and speaks.
¨Give up or face death¨ as he held up a skull.

The knight in fury charged in with no regret.
The commander too, charged in with a war ax in hand.
They both fight for hours in pure rage and excitement.
Both wonder who will last in this final stand.

The knight countered and sliced the commander's head.
The commander falls slowly as head rolls to the knight.
The knight picked up the head of the dead commander and spoke.
¨Your leader is dead! Retreat and you may live!¨ Confirming he won this fight.

After the war ended the knight rode his horse back to the kingdom.
He soon kneeled before the king and confirmed that he slayed the commander.
The King nodded as he announced as he pointed his finger at the knight.
¨You now shall fight in my army as the new highlander¨

The knight stood and bowed before leaving in pride.
He was proud that it was noticed, His heroic stand.
The knight now travels around telling his story.
A smile across his face with his new journey in hand.

A Cold Day

Lisa

Waking up to a cold morning
The sun was nowhere in sight
From all around the neighborhood
Grounds held blankets of pure white

Sidewalks were packed with ice
Where people slipped and slid
And roads being blocked
To prevent any coincidence

Though it was way below average
Covered from head to toe
The young had still gone out
Throwing balls of snow

Heading back inside the house
Where warmth was held
Clothes littered with ice
Laid on the bathroom racks to melt

The day has come to an end
Now snuggled near the fireplace
Cups full of hot cocoa
While Home Alone plays

That Smile of Yours

Fatima Sosa

A gentle warmth that
Warms my smile, your voice,
Like a beautiful tone that
Smoothens my soul.

With you beside me,
Life's a vibrant role.
Your hand in mine
Like a comfortable guide.

Each moment held
So dear, my love for
You, dispelling every fear.

A boundless ocean deep
And ever strong & forever
Will hold and told
Ignoring the darkness
In the very dark.

The heart jumps
And slowly bumps
Into yours enjoying
The bumps of yours.

Morning Games
J Writes

Early morning
Sun barely rising
2 teams heading to the pitch

Ready to give it their all
Sun shines on the lushes green
Grass

Early morning dew
glistening like diamonds
Each step precise like a surgeon

The ball sings a dreamy tune
As players cleats hit it
Thump the ball says

Players taking flight
Tackles every second
Brave players emerge from challenges

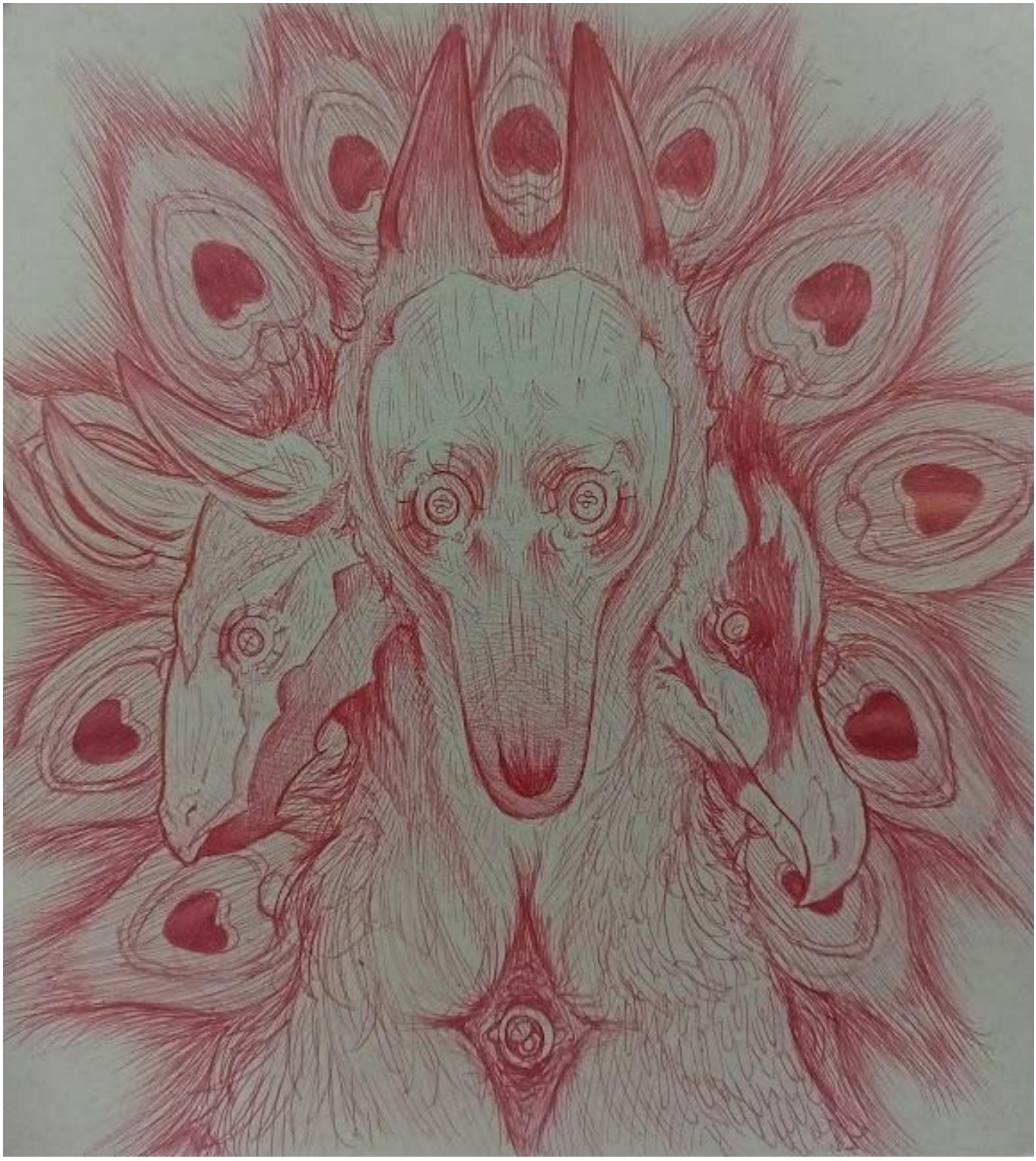
Finally the final whistle blows
As loud as a siren
Cheers are heard around the stadium
After one team wins

After the cheers are heard
Sighs of sadness fill the stadium
The other team leaves the pitch
Disappointed as if they failed their final exam

The Lights that Keep Me Awake

Jose Uribe

Under the night sky, millions with hunger die,
I cry under the bright lie,
The moonlight gazing over the night sky
Cold wind cold breeze almost makes me freeze
Star lights, all shining bright
Houses all dark, like a pitch-black park
Broken shoes, broken clothes, don't know where to go
Had the future, had a plan, now I'm eating off a garbage can
Had a family, and a stable job, all that to think that it's gone
I thought they cared. Now I know I was wrong.
Now all I do is long for that of what is gone.
Spent every day on the streets, sleeping on benches, with these stenches.
I went to school, never had time to party, or go swim in a pool.
I remember my friends, doing all these fun events
Having a roof over your head, being able to stay calm while going to bed.
All alone just wondering If I'll ever again have a home
I wonder everyday about it thought it was good, thought had it
I miss them use to playing sleeping every night I kissed them
Now I'm old while it's cold all I can think about is what I was told
To think love is to be helped. Would make me melt.



Jessica Valdez (DriedBeans)

Ode to Polar Bears

Jessica Valdez (DriedBeans)

A great white northern bear
Covered upon a sleek blanket of snow
Each beautiful beast fighting for their life
Competing with the world around them
Killing each other in a strife
Although an apex predator
They still face large struggles against the wild
Dragging their white paws against the soft snow
Skiing through the ice as they wait for their next meal
As the climate warms the earth
They slowly lose the place they hold dear
As their world slowly crumbles and melts around them
They struggle to survive their home
As we take their meals, their bodies yearn for a bite
Their bones engrave into their skin
Eating one another as a last resort to survive
Covered in blood from their sins
They walk away knowing what they did was necessary
Swimming across the melted ice brought upon them by our kind
Just to try and live another day
Hoping to fill their bellies one more time

RebeccA Price

The Incident at Area-18

Jeremias Vasquez

The man cautiously took a seat at the lunchroom table, subtly eyeing his surroundings: armed men in ballistic vests, white lab coats on the backs of researchers, and scrubs on the residents of the Medical Department. Many people–his coworkers–occupied the seats next to him, although they barely paid any mind to the unfamiliar face that had joined them. Some of the more senior members of the Security Department may have found their lack of scrutiny to be negligent. That's what orientation had taught him to believe, anyway. He tapped the shoulder of the person next to him and introduced himself, "Hey, good afternoon. I'm, uh, I'm Junior Researcher Richard McKeehan. It's my first day on assignment here."

His words were quick and came up short in terms of confidence, but the other man didn't seem to notice as he responded, "First day, huh? I'm Eric, security. You said you're one of the lab boys, right? What'd you do to get sent to this God-forsaken hole in the ground?"

Richard's brow raised slightly in surprise. "What do you mean by *what I did*, is this place meant to be some sort of punishment?" The group of men sitting around the security officer, similarly, dressed to Eric, turned their heads to listen in on the conversation as he chuckled and waved his hand dismissively.

"I'll take that as a plea of innocence. If you really didn't do anything to piss off the boys in black, I'd just chalk it up to bad luck you wound up in Area-18 of all facilities the Foundation has to offer." Richard felt a bead of sweat trickle down the back of his neck, escaping his hair and crawling down his spine like an insect. The researcher was beginning to have second thoughts about coming here, but he knew there was little chance he could get himself out. Administration wasn't going to change their minds just because a lowly junior researcher decided he didn't like his placement.

"You talk about it like this place is awful. What could possibly make Eighteen so terrible? It's modern enough compared to some of the other sites to choose from; plus, we're far too deep underground for anyone to attack the facility." Hushed snickers fell out of the security team's mouths as Eric seemed to join them in their amusement. *Am I that ignorant of what this place is all about?*

"That's the ticket, doc. Sure, there's plenty of safety from everything up above, but other people coming here and takin' a shot at us is the least of my concerns. Hell, it's the least of *anyone's* concerns here. Think about it, we're deep down, that means the only way out is up. How many ways are there up and outta here?" Eric said, a smug smirk stretching across his face.

Richard retreated into his mind as he remembered orientation day. "Alright everyone, listen up," the senior manager boomed, "I know some of you might be

wondering what you're supposed to do in the event of an emergency. Given what kinds of anomalies we contain at this site, you've probably already painted a picture in your head of doomsday if any of them were ever to get out. You're not very far off." A projector shone an image depicting what appeared to be an outline of the available elevators that lead to the outside world. "Now, there's plenty of shelters and security checkpoints, but if s-t hits the fan and a heavy door doesn't cut it…?" He pointed at the image on the wall, "Get to one of these. There's not an abundance of these elevators, so keep yourselves calm for the sake of letting us coordinate an efficient evaluation. "Remember, panic is-" His words were suddenly interrupted by the sound of a sharp, loud alarm blaring over the intercom of the building as Richard snapped out of his memory and came back to reality.

Everyone in the cafeteria looked up and around to spot the speakers and TV displays that were reading off details about the status of the facility. Eric looked at his team and then back to Richard as both of their faces dropped in shock and awe, "Speak of the devil." The site alarm continued to ring out as people began to panic and leave the cafeteria. Eric put on his helmet and took off with the security team he sat with, Richard following closely behind.

"Emergency. Emergency. This site is experiencing multiple keter and euclid level containment breaches. All combatant and security personnel are to respond immediately. Any essential and non-combatant personnel are to report to the nearest breach shelter or to the main elevator rooms to evacuate," said the automated voice over the intercom. For a voice without any real human emotion, somehow it betrayed its artificiality with the sense of urgency in its tone.

Richard and the security team ahead of him all stumbled and nearly fell to the ground as the facility quaked from the force of something terrible rocking the site with its containment breach. The humbuzz of the fluorescent lights above them died out for a split-second as they flickered from the shaking. As the party reached the facility armory, another large impact somewhere a few floors above them created a booming sound of rock and steel being shattered and sent the researcher cascading to the floor as dust fell from the concrete ceiling. The men equipping their gear and loading brass into more capable firearms stopped all at once when the sound of flowing liquid began to emanate from just outside the room. Richard saw their concern and turned to see for himself what captured their attention as he sat on the ground in the process of recovery.

A pool of black liquid spread across the hallway and crept up the wall, the stench of rot and rust poisoning the noses of the armory's occupants as a bald head covered in the thick, sticky fluid began to emerge from the darkness. Eric raised a hand in its direction and shouted with equal parts bravado and fear, "Open fire!" Every man wielding a gun raised their iron sights to their visors and held down their triggers tightly as a hailstorm of bullets flew into the puddle and now rising form of the Old Man. The anomaly's skin appeared to be in a severe state of decomposition, its eyes a milky white stained with blackened malice, and its rotted teeth twisted into a smile. "Move, move, move! Keep your guns on one-oh-six!" Eric yelled, running over to Richard as he helped him to his feet and began leading him out of the armory and

around the slowly approaching Old Man. The being seemed to eye them but paid little mind as the bullets from the rest of the security team sunk into its flesh to no effect.

The Old Man entered the armory, drops of the thick fluid dropping from his body and leaving a sizzling sound as smoke rose from the concrete it fell upon. He quickly snatched the barrel of one man's submachine gun, his corrosive touch warping the polymer and instantly putting it out of commission as he grabbed the security officer connected to it. The security officer, one Landon Mitch, screamed in horror as the corrosive touch began to melt through his uniform and skin. Another pool formed on the concrete and lockers of the wall nearest to the Old Man, opening wide enough for him to re-enter and drag the poor soul along with him as the darkness consumed them both; the men kept firing, but to no avail. Not allowing them a moment of reprieve, the Old Man reached out from another puddle of the corrosive substance that was spreading across the adjacent wall and wrapped his darkened arms around another officer, pulling him headfirst into his world through the pool.

Most of the team took the opportunity to scatter out of the armory and run for Eric and the researcher, but two of the men stayed behind, holding onto the second victim of the Old Man by his legs. The force of the Old Man's grip was far stronger than theirs, but to their surprise, the body went slack as they pulled the officer back out into the real world only to be met with the charred, blackened upper half of the formerly living security guard. They shrieked in terror and took off running from the armory. In the hallway, the rest of their team had gone down, neither of them daring to look back at the peril of slowing down just enough to be caught by the monstrosity and joining the dead. Richard, Eric, and the others regrouped at a reception checkpoint and took a moment to catch their breath while Eric silently performed a head count; not including the researcher, they were down to himself and five men. Just through the door to their left, a crunch and the sound of something thudding against the floor was followed by grinding stone and the appearance of the Statue. Immediately, the members of the security team trained their eyes on the beige, cracked visage of the newest anomaly with its own sights set on them. The Statue was as tall as them, unmoving, short arms outstretched as if reaching for them far before they were actually within its grasp. Its face, if you could call it a face, was a collage of eyes and strange colors spray painted onto the concrete and rebar that formed its head. Richard faced the Statue and stared into its eyes, both lifeless and yet he almost felt the piercing gaze of the Statue staring right back at him. Maybe he was going crazy with how wild and terrifying his introduction to this place and the organization that ran it was, but he could swear the Statue was trying to tell him something.

Eric motioned for the team to start walking backwards to the door on the wall opposite to the one the Statue had just come through, "Nobody blink without calling it out to the rest of us, and don't call it out if anyone else is at the same time." Eric's voice wasn't so loud as it was dead serious, a trained ear may have even noticed a mild wobble. Richard stopped himself halfway in a blink, holding his rapidly-drying eyes open as he shouted to the rest of them, "Blinking!" The team continued this way

as their backs hit the wall and they started to funnel out of the door behind them, staying fixed on the Statue even as they exited.

A large explosion rang out from somewhere several floors beneath them, rocking the building as the lights flickered quickly and the worst sound the team could've heard came from the neck of the last man in front of the door: crunch. His body was facing the Statue, but his wide eyes stared back at Richard while Eric quickly hit the panel on the side of the exit, the steel door sliding into the frame as the body thudded against it and the Statue disappeared from view. Richard had taken just about as much stress as his body could contain, he turned to Eric with a terrified expression and fumbled over his words as he asked, "What the hell is going on here? What are those things? They told me we would be working with strange and anomalous creatures and items, but nothing like that. No, if I had known about that, I would never have come here."

Eric sighed and gave a look of discontentment before responding, "Congratulations, you're in the know now. Some people here have to work for years before they get the clearance to even *know* those things exist. Bad news is they're on our side of the glass now, and you're not a time traveler so I need you to get out of your head about this and focus on getting out of here alive. Otherwise," he ushered towards the door that the Statue was waiting behind.

"Alright, alright, fine," Richard said as he bent and held his knees in a bid to calm down.

Eric smirked with all the smirk he could muster after all that had just happened, "Good choice, white coat. Now let's get out of this hellhole before we end up in the ground just like it." The team began moving again, following signs and screens above the doors and hallways that pointed to the central elevator room. It had grown oddly silent aside from the blaring sirens as they got closer to the hallway just before the elevators, and as the door slid open and Eric walked through, a snarling creature came from out of view and tackled Eric, clawing and biting at him. The security officer behind him rushed into the room to assist but was grabbed by another similar creature and attacked. The three remaining security guards rushed into the room as Richard hesitated but followed suit.

The room was filled with idle creatures that resembled some of the staff at Area-18, only sickly and grossly injured. The zombie-like forms all turned to see the commotion at the door and, like a hivemind, became aggressive all at once. Richard huddled back and covered his ears as the three guards raised their guns and began to cut through the charging horde. A shot on Richard's left made him turn his head as he saw Eric pushing the limp body of one of the infected off of him, its skull with a split from a sidearm he re-holstered. Richard turned to his right, but it appeared the other man wasn't so lucky as he laid limp while the creature tore at his uniform and face. Its decaying face turned as it locked eyes with Richard, slowly rising and staring at him before lunging towards him; Richard closed his eyes and braced for what he assumed would be his demise. BANG! The infected dropped to the floor inches away from Richard as he turned to see Eric holding his submachine gun with smoke rising from the barrel, lowering his gun as he tapped the radio on his chest, "We've got loose oh-oh-eight infected around corridor 23b, all neutralized."

Eric nodded to the remaining two security officers and then to Richard. Just before they turned to enter the elevator room, a familiar sound struck the ears of the men: crunch. One of the two guards collapsed, his neck twisted at an impossible angle as the Statue stood above the corpse, the vent cover above the men busted open by it. All three of them swiftly put their eyes on it and resumed calling out each and every blink, their hearts pounding as they backed towards the final door with escape so close. Eric hit the panel as the three funneled out of the room and closed the door behind them, breathing a sigh of relief. They looked at one another with surprise, not at the events of the containment breach, but at the fact they were all still alive to tell the tale. Without waiting, they huddled together in one of the central elevators and hit the button for ground level as the door automatically shut and they began to rise. The closer they got to the surface, the louder the sounds of vehicle engines and whirring chopper blades got. The silver doors opened as they ran out and made a mad dash for the stairs, practically taking two steps at a time to get to the roof as fast as possible. Finally, they saw their lucky break as a helicopter landed and a few other personnel that had managed to escape as well. The men, along with their fellow survivors, boarded the chopper and allowed themselves to rest at last. Eric turned to Richard with a tired look and gave him a dry smile, "And it's only your first day."

…

THE END

Jessica Valdez (DriedBeans)

The Legend of the Aswang

E.S

Here is the legend of the aswang. Once upon a time long before the aswang was ever a hideous creature, it was once human, living a normal life as a farmer. She lived up in the mountain cliffs, while her village was down below, she would often say, “I would love to have children someday and experience what it's like to be a mother.”

The town folks loved her a lot because she was beautiful, brave, and smart. One day she started having nightmares that something had been chasing her, for a while this had been going on, until one night the village heard screams coming from the mountain, found her, attacked in her own home by a wild wolf. Fighting off the beast, the town folks used pitchforks and machetes to try and kill him. They rushed her to a doctor down in the village. They were able to save her, but they soon realized she was never able to have children ever in her life due to her injury. When she woke up, they told her the news, telling her the wolf attacked her stomach and punctured her womb; she was devastated. Weeks went by and then years. She tried but never managed to have kids.

One day she got sick, they tried giving her valerian root to help her rest and calm down. Little did they know that the root altered her genetic code. She went back to good health.

One night the villagers heard screams coming from the mountains and they couldn't find the woman. They tried searching for days but couldn’t find her. While they didn't search in the caves, her body was changing. She became a hideous creature with pale white skin, sharp teeth, a long tongue with the ends like a needle to puncture, small agile body, fast, sharp claws that help it climb walls and trees, and stronger than 10 men together. Not understanding anything why she was changing she saw this as a blessing, slowly losing her memory and becoming what she has turned into a monster unlike she has ever seen before.

With despair of never being able to have children ever, she thought if I can't have kids no one else can. She started attacking her village, silently hiding in the shadows searching for a pregnant woman to feast on. After chewing valerian root, Aswangs will use their tongues to pierce the navel of a pregnant woman and inject the chemical properties into the woman, tranquilizing her. From there the Aswang will use their tongues to suck the infant out of the womb, but not before sucking up a large amount of amniotic fluid. Throughout the centuries people have seen this creature targeting pregnant women never to be seen again, only to reappear somewhere else feasting on infants inside women's bellies. With revenge on her mind nothing seems to be able to stop. That's the story of the aswang unstoppable creature feeding off woman.

Champions
Mark Bubbles

Champions always separate themselves,
They do what it takes for the win
They never take anything for granted
Throw them the ball and they dunking it in

I am a champion
It didn't just happen I had to grind
This isn't just a game
You have to put in hard work overtime

I'm going to go until I can't go anymore
It's just the way I am
Not too many people can do the
This is a type of life you film

Not all champions are real
Thats why it's eat or be eaten
This life not for beginners
You can't be sitting around sleeping

Can't Compete
Christopher Avrett

When I'm walking around in the dark
Don't follow me, you'll end up in my arms
You done made up your mind
My mind, setting off alarms

I don't need no more signs
Give me reasons we should be complete
Can you?
You should be with him, I can't compete

Just hear my voice in your head
Shutting me out of you
Doing so great
Used to be the one to hold you

I don't wanna go home
Can it be one night?
Can you?
Just need something light

You looked at me like I was someone else
Give me reasons we should be complete
Can't you see?
You should be with him, I can't compete

Ode to Rain

Mayleah B.

The sound of you fills me with comfort
Even if I can't stand to be here anymore
Your sound soothes the raging storm within me
Like a projection of my feelings there's no need for a sound
Your feel is even better, when I'm alone under your gaze
And It gets overwhelming and the tears start forming
Your touch blends in, it hides me from the judging gaze of others
I can let go with no thought
There's no need for me to pretend
Even as my clothes start to soak and form a second skin
And a cold will come when this begins to end
I stand here enjoying this moment
Because when your touch, your sound starts to fade
I'll be forced to pretend again
Forced to conform to the restrictions of society
Forced to go along with what's normal
Even if it hurts me more than my abnormality
So in this moment with just you watching over me
I'll enjoy the sound of you
I'll enjoy the touch of you
Because this is the only time I'll be free

Motherhood
Trinity Busby

Motherhood is a wonderful thing to experience although it comes with difficulty.
It's also a very teaching act that takes time, patience and strength.
Motherhood is like a full-time job, definitely not easy but very rewarding.
Life as a mother is a once-in-a-lifetime experience that not everyone can experience.

Motherhood can be challenging if you're a person with low patience.
Mothers go through enough trouble by just delivering their babies.
It's not a book you can read about motherhood; it's something you learn as you go.
As a mother you realize everything is no longer about you but about another human as well.

Life can be joyful, but once you enter the life as a mother, it gets a lot better.
Motherhood is stressful but it's nothing you can experience in life that's better than being a mom.
Think about motherhood as being a new lawyer, very busy but also a new routine.
As a mother you barely have time for yourself especially as a single mom.

Life as a single mother is more hard than life as a mother with help.
Being a single mother comes with more responsibilities because everything is on one person.
As a mother you need as much support you can receive.
No support makes it hard to do anything like making a living for yourself and kid.

Motherhood is about guidance, inspiration, and support.
Motherhood puts me in the mindset of sisterhood a very strong love.
I encourage any mother to find their flaws in motherhood because it's not gonna be perfect.
I enjoy motherhood because it teaches you so much in life and is a good experience.

Letting Go
Marissa Camargo

That one winter day we were once everything
Intertwined with each other.

Now the love that once burned like a fire has turned into ashes
As all the memories now a fading light.

Nightmares of us
A bittersweet reminder of where love used to once be.

Endless nights of memories of us
Our laughter, our love, whispers.

All things I once loved
Once a dream now a nightmare haunting me.

Your touch that was once warm now cold
Like the day we meet that one winter day.

As I let go of this fight
You that was once home now a distant shore
I'll leave and sail away forever.

Finally free like a bird that left its nest flying away
Never turning back.

A rope tied around my heart that I now untie
Like closing a book chapter to start another

A wound once opened bleeding
Now just a scar that will heal.

Junior Years

LaBrandon Cleaver-Lockett

“The Happiest Place on Earth”
Maybe Disneyland in California
But I found my Happiest Place on Earth
In my living room at home

Disney Junior “Where the Magic Begins”
A warm welcoming from Choo Choo Soul
The lion guard with their bravery and confidence
Wild but fun Adventures with the Puppy Dog Pals

Worries at all just vibing with the VKs
Spreading kindness and love along Doc McStuffins
Navigating the unknown with Maui and Moana
Exploring galaxies alongside Miles from Tomorrowland

The party's right here at the Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
Problem solving along the OCTONAUTS and Sofia the First
All you can do is shout at Nancy Needs to Go
A wonderful place with a wonderful land

With love and joy
Bright and vibrant
Entertaining and festive
Welcome to Disney Junior

The Last Bell

K2

It feels unreal, like a dream
wrapped in days,
The halls we know now start
to fade away.
Faces we've seen since we
were small, Soon scattered, leaving these
painted walls.
We used to complain about
the tests and the grind,
But now we look back, and
I wish for more time.
Laughter In lunch lines, late
night spent awake,
The friendships, the
moments we didn't know
we'd make it.
Teachers who pushed us,
and the lessons they gave,
Words that stick with us, like
waves on a page.
The thrill of tomorrow, mixed
with fear,
Of stepping out now, with
futures unclear.
Cheers to the years, to the
memories we've made,
To the last bell ringing, as we
walk away.
With cap in the air and
hearts on the rise,
Here's to goodbyes and to start our
new lives.

A Quiet Love

Natalie C.

It was the middle of September when Mia first noticed him. The hallways of Crestwood High were buzzing with the excitement of a new school year. Friends greeted each other after summer break, lockers were slammed open and shut, and teachers tried to impose some order amidst the chaos. Mia, shy and reserved, preferred to blend into the background, staying in the quieter corners where she could escape the noise.

On that day, while walking her to her literature class, she saw him. He was sitting alone at a table in the library, hunched over a sketchpad, completely absorbed in whatever he was drawing. His shaggy brown hair hung just over his eyes, and he wore an old band t-shirt that looked like it had been washed on too many times. There was something about the way he was so focused, so content in his own world, that caught Mia's attention.

Mia lingered at the library door for a moment longer than she should have, her curiosity piqued. Who was this boy? She had never seen before. New faces were rare at Crestwood Hight, especially juniors like her. She considered walking over to him, maybe introducing herself, but she quickly dismissed the thought. Mia wasn't the kind of girl who approached strangers.

As the weeks passed, she saw him more often, always in the same spot, always drawing. She'd catch glimpses of his sketches as she passed by, detailed portraits of faces, landscapes filled with trees and winding rivers, sometimes abstract shapes she didn't quite understand but found intriguing, He never seemed to notice her, lost in his art as he was, but Mia found herself looking forward to her brief moments of passing him by.

One crisp fall afternoon, everything changed. Mia was hurrying to the library after school, hoping to finish her homework in peace before heading home. As she rounded the corner to her usual table, she nearly collided with him. He was standing there, right in front of her, sketchbook in hand.

"Sorry!" Mia blurted, stepping back, her face flushing with embarrassment.

"No, my bad" he said, flashing a sheepish smile. His voice was quiet, almost soft, and Mia noticed how kind his brown eyes looked. "I wasn't paying attention."

Mia nodded, unsure what else to say. They stood in an awkward silence for a moment before he spoke again.

"I'm Ethan, by the way," he said, holding out his hand.

"Mia," she replied, shaking his hand gently.

"Do you come here often? I've seen you around," he asked, glazing toward the table where Mia usually sat.

"Yeah," she said, feeling a bit awkward under his gaze. "I like how quiet it is in here. Easier to concentrate."

"Same," he said, his smile widening slightly. "I usually come here to draw."

"I've noticed," Mia admitted before she could stop herself, then quickly added "I mean, I've seen your sketches when I walk by. They're really good."

Ethan looked surprised but not in a bad way. "Thanks. I don't usually show them to people."

"Well you should. You're really talented," Mia said, her words coming out more confidently than she felt.

For the first time in weeks, Mia saw Ethan without his sketchbook. They talked for a few more minutes before Ethan excused himself, saying he had to catch the bus home. As he left, Mia couldn't help but smile. She had finally spoken to him. Over a few days, their brief encounter turned into something more. Ethan started sitting at Mia's table in the library, and they'd talk between bouts of silence, him sketching and her reading or working on homework. At first, their conversations were surface level, about school, their favorite books, or the latest music. But gradually, they opened up to each other.

Mia learned that Ethan had moved to Crestwood just before the school year started. His dad had gotten a new job, and the sudden move had been tough on him. He didn't know many people and found it easier to retreat into his art than try to make new friends. Mia understood the feeling all too well. She'd always been shy, never one for big social groups, and preferred the comfort of a good book over loud parties.

As the weeks went on, their friendship deepened. Ethan showed Mia more of his sketches, explaining all the stories behind some of them, while Mia shared her favorite book with him. They started walking home together after school, even though Mia lived a bit out of the way for Ethan. It became their routine, a quiet ritual that both of them enjoyed.

One chilly November afternoon, as they walked along the leaf-strewn sidewalk, Ethan broke the comfortable silence with a question. "Mia, do you ever feel like you don't quite fit in?"

Mia looked up at him, surprised by the sudden vulnerability in his voice. "All the time," she admitted. "It's like everyone else has it all figured out, and im just….
Floating."

"Yeah," Ethan said, nodding. That's exactly it."

They walked a little further before Ethan stopped and turned to face her. "But when I'm with you, I don't feel like that. I don't feel lost."

Mia's heart fluttered. She wasn't sure how to respond, her pulse quickening as she searched for the right words. She felt the same way. Around Ethan, the noise of the world seemed to fade away, leaving only the two of them.

"I feel the same way," Mia whispered, her voice barely audible above the rustling leaves.
For a moment, neither of them spoke. The world around them seemed to pause as they

stood there, looking at each other. Ethan stepped closer, reaching out to tuck a stray strand of Mia's hair behind her ear. His touch was gentle, and Mia felt her heart race in a way it never had before.

"I've wanted to tell you for a while now," Ethan said softly, "but I didn't want to mess things up."

"You're not," Mia replied, her voice steady despite the butterflies in her stomach.

Ethan smiled, and without another word, he leaned in and kissed her, a soft, sweet kiss that sent warmth flooding through Mia's chest. When they pulled away, they both smiled shyly, the quiet understanding between them deepening.

From that day on, things between Mia and Ethan were different but in the best way. They still spent hours in the library, still walked home together, but now there was a new layer to their bond something unspoken but undeniably there. It wasn't a grand, dramatic love story like the ones in Mia's favorite novels, but it was theirs, and that was all that mattered.

Janaya Winston

The Haunting Doll...
Destiny Delarosa

Mary has lived in her house for as long as she can remember. It was once her great grandma's house and then passed down to her grandmother then her mom, but one cloudy day her mother unfortunately passed after a hard battle with cancer, leaving Mary and her five-year-old Jenny alone at the two-floor, four-bedroom house echoing with emptiness. Mary would always find herself waking up in the middle of the night in random places like the attic or the shed but recently she had woken up inside her daughter's room holding a lighter with gasoline poured all over herself.

After the incident Mary decided to go to the church her Mom would always go to to ask for answers and help. She was getting worried she might come to hurt her daughter one day. As she arrived at the church, they started spraying her from head to toe in holy water as they felt the negative spirit she carried with her. Mary was terrified as she carried her baby in her arms getting cleaned with hold water before the priest took her to sit in his office. The priest could tell how exhausted Mary looked and saw a black shadow right above her shoulder with every movement she made. Mary pled for help to the priest saying how weird things had been happening ever since her mother passed, leaving her empty presence and cold climate all around her house. She told the priest about the night she woke up in Jenny's room terrified, about what else she is capable of doing while she's unconscious, not aware of her surroundings. The priest saw the desperate look in Mary's eyes so he agreed to help her, and they planned a date so he could go to her house and perform a ritual to keep all negative energy away from Mary and her daughter.

The day of the ritual it was storming. At exactly 12:00 a.m., they start setting everything up making sure everything was in place and the priest informed Mary on the possible outcomes that came with this ritual. After praying, it hit 2:22 a.m., and the priest started the ritual with Mary and Jenny in the middle of the living room as they prayed with the priest. The room started flickering the lights on and off as the belongings started flying around the room; Mary held her baby. After what felt like hours it was only 3:00 a.m., and the spirit was revoked from Mary's house, body, and her daughter as well. Mary wept as she fell to her knees thanking the priest, saying how will she ever repay him. The priest with a genuine smile on his face helped her up and gave her a blessing. She hugged him, and they turned the lights on and saw the house flipped upside down. The priest went around the belongings blessing it all with hold water. At 4:00 a.m. the priest left smiling at Mary.

The Magic Kitchen
Starla Green

Waking up and walking to a warm kitchen, on a Sunday night
Food makes me happy, with a tasty sight
Pots and pans banging against one singing and playing
Making meals in such a good and yummy way.

Bread that's baked so good with a wonderful taste
So nice and hot
It always hits the spot

A big tray of jerk chicken, so good to eat
With sauce and rice, it's always so nice
Family and friends gather
Sit at the table and smile
Eating together, all the while

Good juice and sweet desserts, oh what a wonderful treat
Cakes and pies are so fun to eat
With chocolate drips, that are so savory and sweet
Every bite is a special treat.

From snacks to meals from people big or small
God brings joy to everyone and all
Eating together it's the best with
Food and friends wow! We are so BLESSED !

My Bed

nikaiyah harper

I love you
Something I can come to when I'm sad
When I'm feeling down
You may not talk!
You may not walk
Even when I'm crying you can't even hold me!
But for some reason you're my go to
You're so comfortable!
I can lay on you
Have the best and the worst dreams
I'm so territorial about you
I treat you like a baby
I make sure everyone is clean before laying on you
I look forward to you every day when I leave
I be sure you are clean and ready to get comfortable in
You've seen all stages of me
Depression, happiness, sad
I can be myself around you
You are my best friend
I LOVE YOU, my bed.

The Days Are as Good as Can Be

Adam Martell

The days are as good as can be
The birds are chirping, and the skies are blue
The grass is green, and the dogs are barking.
The day can be as best as it can be.

The water is as clear at glass
The frogs are croaking
The fish are swimming
The air smells clear as glass

The city is loud and rolling
The cars are honking
The people are walking
And the clouds are moving

The buildings are standing proud and tall
There's always a nice breeze in fall
The people love what they see and what they saw
The people and the city is in awe

As the sun goes down the city starts to rest
The people and animals go back to their nest
The cops disarm themselves and take off their vest
As they get ready for a once in a year fest

Caravel

Alexandra Martinez

Destiny was sitting alone in her luxury New York penthouse apartment bored. Despite all the things she had, and she had a lot, she didn't know what to do with her day. So she decided shopping would fix the problem. She called her friend, "Hey Alexa, how are you? I… I was calling you if you wanted to go to an auction with me then just go grab a coffee after and some dinner?"

"Hey Destiny, long time no talk. YESS! I would love to go with you and that would be good to catch up on our lives and will go on from there."

"Okay perfect. See you outside the library and I'll pick you up?"

"Okay perfect. Sounds good. See you then."

LATER THAT DAY… in the auction she got the doll and went to grab dinner and coffee with Alexa, and then took her home.

Destiny got home and gave a tour to Caraval. That same night, she started to notice weird things in her penthouse. Things moved around. She heard noises in the middle of the night after buying the doll named "Caraval."

Destiny gave Caraval her own special room which was the guest room. She decorated it with bright colors. Caraval had a very white pretty dress with her shoes and socks. The guy at the auction told Destiny, "She was very pretty and expensive because they said she was a one of a kind and that she was not as the rest of the dolls."

Destiny looked concerned and weirded out but all she said, "umm… okay she is very gorgeous."

Caraval started to get comfortable in Destiny's penthouse, so she started to move things around. One Saturday around 2:00 a.m., she woke up by a loud boom in the living room. Next to the living room was the guest room. Since Destiny stayed upstairs, she went downstairs and grabbed a bat saying, "Who's there. You better go before I call police on you." She went downstairs and found her picture from when she first moved over to her penthouse down. She found Caraval on the floor. She fixed the picture frame and put Caraval back to her bed. As soon as she was closing the door in Caraval's room, the picture frame fell on the floor again, so Destiny said, "Caraval, I know it's you. Can you please stop messing around. It's 3:00 o'clock in the morning. Can I have some rest please? Thank you."

Weeks passed and things would go missing; her stuff moved around. Destiny hired a priest and they both had to face Caraval. When the Priest arrived at Destiny's penthouse, he said, "Okay let's get this thing over it show me where's Caraval's room?"

The priest started to throw holy water in Caraval's room outside the door and inside her room and also on Caraval. He set a camera

inside Caraval's room. To get footage and to analyze it. Things started to get bad. Caraval got more mad at Destiny after bringing the priest to her special room. In the camera footage, they didn't see anything weird.

Caraval started to throw things around, and she started to get more ugly, dirty as if someone had played with her outside. As time passed, the priest had to face Caraval. He had the opportunity to bring her back to normal as a good beautiful doll as she was, but then Caraval would get more mad so she would slam the door as soon as the priest wanted to step foot in her room. He stated to throw holy water praying with his bible and saying, "JESUS BRING CARAVAL BACK TO NORMAL. MAKE HER AS SHE WAS BACK THEN. IN THE NAME OF JESUS I COMAND YOU TO TAKE THE DEMON OUT OF CARAVAL. SHE IS NOT YOURS. IN THE NAME OF JESUS HEAR ME TONIGHT PUT CARAVAL PRETTY AGAIN!"

Candles turned off and harsh wind passed thru the room Destiny and the priest got goose-bumps. CARAVAL got pretty again. She wasn't dirty anymore. The priest left and gave Destiny holy water and told her to "throw holy water in Caraval's room every day so she could be good." The lesson of the story is that people shouldn't go to an auction if they're betting on a doll that looks beautiful or ugly regularly.

Summer Vacation
Mya Martinez

The sun appears to ascend, it´s golden orange heat aglow.
In the cotton candy skies, the pigeons began to fly.
As the gentle breeze breezes through my face and the sand flows.

The vibrant blooms in every hue they bring and string.
A tapestry of colors, bright and fair,
While children laugh and dance in joyful rings.

The Days stretch long with warmth beyond compare.
As twilight paints the sky in shades of Orange, Red and Pink.
And stars emerge to light the evening air.

The flowers making my day receiving water to stay fresh.
As I am whole with family in the flesh.

My Summer Vacation I embraced the memories I am making, all my worries shed.

Boots and Cats

Mollie M

Boots and cats
And
Boots and cats
A silly rhythm I mutter to myself in the morning
Boots and cats
And
Boots and cats
I slip on my boots and feel the rough soles
I tie the laces tightly to strap my imagination down to Earth
Like a kid trying to hold down a kite against rough winds
But it doesn't work
Boots and cats
And
Boots and cats
I tell myself everything I do today and make sure to push myself
I have to be serious and focus
No silly excuses
Childhood dreams are fading
My thoughts whirl around my head like 'Ring Around the Rosie'
Taunting and teasing me
It gets dizzying
Boots and cats
And
Boots and cats
I feel my kitties soft fur rub against my hand
I hear their soft purrs and at once I'm brought back to Earth
Boots and cats
And
Boots and cats
My mind settles to a different rhythm
I see my green emerald heart ring
I feel my silver cat necklace
I think of my love
My happiness
My comfort
I am reminded that I can be wondrous and still be productive

I know it's ok
I can get through the day
Boots and cats
And
Boots and cats

Janaya Winston

Memories
Noemi Medina

A world expanding, little by little
Where time moves slowly like waves moving front and back at the beach
With every day that passes by new adventures and painted over the old ones

The feel of the soft grass on your skin while rolling around during a summer day
The feel of the ice-cold fruit punch flavor from the popsicle on your tongue to help cool off
Chasing fireflies that flitter and hide in the grass and light up for you to find them as if you're playing hide and seek, carrying fluffy pillows, blankets and putting chairs together to build forts as your castle kingdom where you could make your own rules without cares.

The smell of the rain and the feeling of water landing on your face or on your legs due to the splashing around in the puddles and the sound of laughter and giggling later on transitioning
To the sound of coughs and runny noses with the blurred background of our moms yelling at us for playing in the rain the reason why we got sick but knowing it was worth it

The smell of fire with chocolate and the sound of the crackling while making smores
The feel of the stickiness on your hands due to the marshmallow getting all of the place

Dallas Cowboys is Trash as the Panthers

Brandon Nunez

In the deep heart of Texas, where the stars are shining,
Once it stood like a titan, a footballing dream.
Now Echos of a glory lie that buried our promise
For Superbowl in the ash, As Fans shake their
Heads, "The Dallas Cowboys are trash."

Like a once-mighty river, now dried up like
The desert, The Pride of Our Franchise has
Lost in the air in every and each season a promise,
Each game a fresh start but our hopes turn
To dust and start fading away from hopes
And dreams.

A broken blue star, once a beacon of light,
And now flickers in the cold, endless night
With banners once waving, Now tattered
And torn, the weight of expectations feels heavy
And worn.

In the stands, weary hearts beat with a sorrowful
Tune, as they watch their team fumbled, Beneath the same moon
Like a Shadows of giants, they stumble and crash like a car
In the annals of history, "Dallas Cowboys is Trash as the panthers"
This will repeat like a loop over and over till Jerry Jones is fired.

A Broken Mirror

Myla Vazquez

Do you see yourself?
The beauty in your features
Or is it the insecurities in your mind
Maybe it's the tears falling on your pictures

A reflection of an angel
Staring at the image of the devil
The grace will always linger
As she drops to a lower level

Thoughts venture through darkness
Sweet words leave a bitter taste
Validation creates suffering
A princess turned to waste

She turns to isolation
Her soul begins to wither away
The pillow bottling her tears
Still her false joy on display

Will she pick up the broken shards?
Will her beauty ever be clearer?
Will she float to the heavens?
Will she ever fix the broken mirror?

Kaiju Of Hollywood
oxyntes

He storms outside, his fists clenched tight,
The cameras fade, the set goes dark,
Another role lost his whole career gone
He lost his ambition, all his spark.

Down the dirty alley, he stumbles fast,
Anger burns, his eyes begin to glow,
His skin grows rough, his breath holds still,
Scales crawl from head to toe.

Bones twist and grow, his limbs expand,
Lights, camera, action—his rage ignites,
The creature is now reincarnated,
Once a man, now monstrous heights.

He stares at claws where fingers were,
A large amount of panic gets to him questioning this disorder
His tail smacks into a building, screams heading towards his ears
All this chaos causes him to have eyes of horror.

Feathers

Aron Reyes

the bird flies away just beyond my
Fingertips,

a flash of its wings against the dimming
Sky,

filling the horizon with its
Promise.

I stumble around the mountains of
Expectations,

trampling through the dense forests of
Anxiety,

all while breathing I'm breathing
Heavily

I still strive deeper into the mud of
Yesterday.

Happiness
lies far in the distance that blooms like a beautiful orchard

The bird
swooped down to the tree with ease

Elegant
as it picks at the fruit

Peaceful
as it relaxes, free of danger or stress

Inspiration
feels me as the bird flaps its wings

however the weight of my unfinished dreams
Drag me down.

like broken stones, their sharp edges
Stab me

Yet, I refuse to
Let go

this behavior may appear
Foolish

but if struggling is
Impudent

then aren't we all
clowns

Perseverance
against struggle is where one wisens

Then maybe at the end of the tunnel, we can find true happiness.

New place

Jean-Luc

Riding in the car silently
Stars at the passing images
Thinking of all the friendships I once had
Moving to a new place feels like losing privileges

Arriving at the new house
I take a look at the outside
There's some land with the place
There's even a 20ft metal slide

Inside the house
I start bringing in my things
Exploring the house observing the ugly wallpaper
This entire house will need a change

I see the walls with chipped paint
The floors, rotted and splintered
Windows with vines on them
Into the living room I reentered

Flowers, growing from the brick fireplace
Sunlight coming through the cracked roof
Beaming down on a single purple flower
Beauty can be found anywhere, as this flower is proof

Prayer
Cristobal

God why does everyone act like everything's black white
Democrat republican good side bad side

Which one's which though both tell mad lies to get votes
And both them manipulate mankind with info

Land of the animals they don't understand no donkeys
And elephants I'm ride with the lion and goats
But all this was planned for

So I keep the word over bull like lambo

I am Nobody's mascot of Sambo

and I don't care about the The flag and what it stand for
I care more about the cross and who carry it

Cuz if you love Christ I don't care if they American that
What unites us it's about the who not the red white or blue
It is Christ that ignites us

Rich man poor man free man life for one race covered by
the same blood Christ amen.

Golf

Edson Sauceda

Golf is the life of all sports
Once you retire the athletes become golfers

Golf is life
Life is golf

We are all driven together
We all drive in unity in life

We are all united with sports
Because the glory is what unites us all together

Sports unites everyone around the world
The world cup is the world's biggest stage
Soccer is a global phenomenon that makes the world unite

Peace unites the world
Sports unites the world
Golf unites the world

All sports unite to be with golf
Athletes eventually will be golfers
Golf is the sport of all sports

Sports are the most entertaining things to be invented
Golf unites us all
Just like sports unites us all

I Love Winter

Jerriah Sims

I love winter
Winter is the best season
Bundle up in soft warm and cozy blanket
While binge watching a good show
The sound of the cold instantly warms my heart
Hearing Christmas music brings me joy
Hearing Santa Claus “Ho Ho Ho” warms my soul
The smell of the cold is a wonderful smell
Winter and Christmas give me a feeling of cloud nine
Baking during winter gives me euphoria
The smell of the baking treats gives me a thrill
Love for winter is also hearing the wind outside
of your home and the sound of the trees
brushing together that will refurbish in the spring
You know it's winter when you smell the hot chocolate
And the pinecones
The walk outside and your nose feeling like ice is refreshing
Winter holds warmth in it,
Life is cold without it
Winter gives me nostalgia
Winter is nostalgic

Janaya Winston

Joys of Fishing
Braden Vargas

The line sings out, a thin whisper
against the wind's roar, a silver thread
unspooling into the jade green depths.

Patience, a learned stillness, sun
warming my face, the gentle rock of
the boat a lullaby against the shore

The world shrinks, focused on the tip
of the rod, the taut line, a silent
conversation between me and the
unseen below.

A sudden tug, a vibrant pulse, the line
sings a different song now, a thrumming,
eclectic dance. The reel whirs, a joyful scream

A flash of silver, a gasp of air, the fight
begins. Muscle against muscle, a silent
ballet of strength and will.

Then, stillness again. The weight, a
comforting presence. A shimmering
arc, pulled from the cool embrace of
the water, a fleeting glimpse of a
Hidden world. And then, release. Back
to the depths, the silver thread unwinding,
The cycle begins anew.

Locked Car
Dan Vargas

I locked my keys in my car
And now I'm stuck in such a mess
I stare at it this foolish farce
My mind's blur my head´s my heart´s a stress

I knock on the window try to peek
But there's only one way to make it right
The keys inside oh what a freak
Of luck or fate or just the night

I pull the handle twist the lock
But nothing moves its all too tight
I've made a mistake a silly shock
I should've checked before this flight

I pace around I think and curse
As time just slips and slips away
A simple error not its worse
I'll be here longer than I'd say

I call a friend they´ll come but late
I wait alone with thoughts that churn
Next time I'll learn before its fate
To check the door before I turn

I Talked to Her

Lana Vazquez

Her body clenched in, melting into the scenery,
She said to herself, *"You're everything I need."*
She never knew that her very own words..
Could leave her feeling so *freed*.

Her vision turned blurry..
As the cornfields that she laid on embraced *her*.
The cold breeze talked to her,
While all of her anxieties turned into a *blur*.

Turning over, she smelled the flowers surrounding the fields.
For once in her life.. She chose to nourish *herself*.
For her heart is more fundamental,
And her soul should reward *relief*.

She would get up off her feet,
She repeated, *"You're everything I need."*
Her hair blew everywhere..
As she rushed through the *cornfield*.

She found comfort in running..
She ran and ran.. all to confront her *worries*.
The same worries that would consume her..
Would now turn into lively *symphonies*.

She told herself for one of the last times,
"You're everything I need to bear these fears."